

"This Earth is Precious"

by: Chief Seattle

In 1854 the "great white chief" in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a reservation for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply published here has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made. (The earth is precious) how can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them. (All sacred) every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony and man, all belong to the same family. (Not easy) so when the great chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The great chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us. This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water, but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you our land, you must remember that it is sacred and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The waters murmur is the voice of my fathers' father. (Kindness) The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember and teach your children that the rivers are our brothers and yours and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother. We know that the white man does not understand our ways. I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the

red man is a savage and does not understand. There is not quiet place in the white mans cities. No place to hear the unfurling of the leaves in the spring or the rustle of a insects wings. But perhaps it because i am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am red man and do not inderstand. The indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond and the smell of the wind itself cleaned by midday rain or scented with the pinion pine.

(Precious) The air is precious to the red man for all things share the same breath the beast the tree the man. They all share the same breath. But if we sell you our land you must remember that the air is precious to use that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And if we sell you our land you must keep it apart and sacred as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweented by the meadows flowers. (Our Ciondition) So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept i will make one condition, The white man must treat the beats of this land as his brothers. I am a savage and i do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie left by the white man who shot the froma passing train. I am a savage and i do not undertsand how the smokking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill to stay alive. What is man without the beasts? If all the beats were gone man would die from a great loneliness of the spirit. For what ever happens to the beats soon happens to man. All things are connected. (The Ashes) You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet are the shes of your grandfathers. So that they will respect the land tell your cildren that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground they spit upon them selves. This we know all things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life he is merely s strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself. Even the white man whose god walks and talks with him as friend to friend cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all.